



**Minutes of the September 22, 2020
Hybrid Meeting**

**Pursuant to Governor Raimondo's Executive Order 20-34,
this was a Hybrid meeting**

RHODE ISLAND BOARD OF EDUCATION

Chair Barbara Cottam called the September 22, 2020, hybrid meeting to order at 5:32 p.m. and acknowledged that a quorum was present. Due to social distancing restrictions, this meeting was held in person for Board members and essential personnel only, including:

Participating in person: Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan, Timothy DelGiudice, *Brandon Feliz, Rachelle Green, and Lawrence Purtill

Remote Participation: Amy Beretta
*Margo Cook,
Dennis Duffy
Gara Field
Jo Eva Gaines
Rachelle Green
Thomas Izzo
Marta Martinez
Mike Mello
Marianne Monte
Jeffery Williams

Absent: Karen Davis
*Mike Grey
*Stephan Pryor

*Ex-officio, non-voting member

Public access was provided to attendees of this Zoom webinar in compliance with the Open Meetings Act and the provisions of the Executive Order; contact information was provided for those experiencing technical difficulties.

After going over some ground rules, Chair Cottam asked for a motion for acceptance of the agenda.

1. ACCEPTANCE OF THE AGENDA

Chair Cottam asked for a motion to accept the agenda of the September 22, 2020, meeting.

On a motion duly made by Tim DelGiudice and seconded by Rachelle Green, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education accepts the agenda for the hybrid meeting of September 22, 2020

Vote: 14 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Timothy DelGiudice, Dennis Duffy, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Mike Mello, Marianne Monte, Lawrence Purtill, and Jeffery Williams

NAYS: 0

ABSTAIN: 0

2. APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES

2a. Minutes of the May 27, 2020, Meeting

Chair Cottam asked for a motion to accept the minutes of the May 27, 2020, meeting.

On a motion duly made by Timothy DelGiudice and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That the Rhode Island Board of Education approves the minutes of the May 27, 2020, meeting

Vote: 12 members voted in the affirmative, 0 members voted in the negative, and 2 members abstained, as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Colleen Callahan, Barbara Cottam, Timothy DelGiudice, Dennis Duffy, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Thomas Izzo, Marta Martinez, Mike Mello, Marianne Monte, and Lawrence Purtill

NAYS: 0

ABSTAIN: 2

[Board members Green and Williams abstained as they did not attend the May 27, 2020, meeting of the RI Board of Education]

At this time, Chair Cottam welcomed Brandon Feliz, Chair of the RI Student Advisory Council and student representative on the Council on Elementary and Secondary Education, to his first meeting of the Board of Education.

3. OPEN FORUM

Chair Cottam announced that no one had signed-up to speak.

4. DISCUSSION ITEMS

a. Reopening of Schools – Status Update

- PK-12 Education

Commissioner Infante-Green framed the discussion by congratulating Rhode Island, which after months of preparation, schools across our great State opened last week, welcoming thousands of students back to in-person learning. She shared that along with Chair Cottam, she spent some time at a few schools, and it was a joy to hear the laughter and feel the energy of young learners enjoying their first week back. She noted that although not a perfect start, for each challenge that has appeared, local school leaders and staff, supported by State resources, have rolled-up their sleeves to “get the job done.” She stressed that now the real work begins, giving students the best education possible so they can prepare for success in any path they choose. She reminded folks that although public health concerns remain, we have allies and partners from State and local government to help us on that front.

Next, Ana Riley, RIDE’s Deputy Commissioner for Instructional Programs, gave an update on where the PK-12 education system is in terms of school reopening readiness. She shared that every school district, with the exception of Providence and Central Falls, met the public health criteria for full reopening, and 100 thousand students returned for in-person instruction on September 14. She reported that RIDE, in partnership with the RI Department of Health, and the RI National Guard, built a dedicated interagency support framework - Education Operations Center (EdOC) – to support districts and non-public schools. During the summer months, the EdOC reviewed and provided feedback to districts on their reopening plans, conducted facility walk-throughs to ensure that schools had operationalized different elements of their reopening plans, and provided professional learning opportunities for school employees. Districts have the option to phase students back to full or partial in-person instruction, until October 13, 2020.

- Postsecondary Education

Dr. David Dooley, University of Rhode Island President, reported that the university opened with a Flexible Mix (Flex-Mix) of in-person, blended, and fully virtual teaching and learning modalities. At this time, 45% of the university’s typical courses are in-person/blended and the remaining are online; in-person is augmented by internships, undergraduate research, special topics, and independent studies. The Flex-Mix model was necessary to de-densify the classroom and campus environment as well as to meet the class delivery needs and desires of both students and faculty.

These de-densification efforts resulted in a 65% decrease in the student “class scheduled” population on campus each day, which helps to mitigate risk and transmission. He noted that enrollment, is at or above, target across the board, with on-target meaning three percent decline built into the university’s fiscal year 2021 allocation. President Dooley went on to share that URI hosted over 540 (116 unique ones) and 10,000 student registrations; approximately 4,000 student are living in on-campus housing; 6,664 COVID-19 tests were administered by URI Health Services between mid-August and mid-September, resulting in 81 positive cases, being attributed to small group interactions, and not the result of large parties. As of September 21, URI has 451 individuals in quarantine or isolation as a result of positive tests, which includes those students who tested positive elsewhere and are now being tracked by Health Services. Students, faculty and the community are working hard to adjust to a fall semester that is unique with many new challenges, and students who are living down-the-line in Narragansett, are adhering to social gathering limits.

Next, Dr. Frank Sanchez, Rhode Island College President, highlighted some of the elements of the college’s reopening plan as well as some of the immediate enrollment and budgetary challenges that the school will be facing this fall. As far as academic instruction, the school is leaning more on the teaching/learning, working on a predominately remote environment for the fall semester, with most to the classes either completely online, both synchronous and asynchronous, as well as hybrid. There are some selected programs where students are taking some in-person classes, with at least 1,000 students having at least one in-person class, adhering to health and safety protocols, including freshman students as part of the college’s 100 course. Dining and housing services has been modified, currently at a 40% occupancy. The facilities team spent the entire summer working on a plan to ensure that the physical spacing adheres to the RIC Cleaning for Health Plan, with increased cleaning protocols of high-touch locations throughout the campus. RIC is using the Rave Guardian App to conduct wellness checks for all students, faculty, and staff who enter the campus. He stressed that RIC’s enrollment numbers have taken a significant hit this fall, however, when looking at the data back to the first week of July, the college was anticipating nearly a 13% decline in enrollment. Due to the tremendous work of the management team, admissions, student services, advising staff, as well as a very successful multimedia advertising campaign, the 13% decline went down to 6%. On the finance side, this year will be the most challenging for the college, as it is coming off a projected 4.1M budget deficit, bringing the total projected deficit between 10.4M and 12.4M., attributed to decrease in enrollment, increase in mitigation costs, and no increase in state-aid over the recommended fiscal year 2020-21 budget, with a projected additional 15% reduction for the 2022 fiscal year.

Next, Meghan Hughes, Community College of Rhode Island President, reported that the college is delivering fall courses mostly in remote fashion, with a handful of exceptions, such as labs and hands-on courses. The college converted the Great Hall for students to gather in a socially distance fashion, in order to access the Wi-Fi, take a class online, or a safe study space. As of last Monday, the fall enrollment was just over 13,500 students (9% below next year), which is in line with what the American Association of Community Colleges reported this week, nationally. This is an improvement from the nearly 30% drop that the college faced throughout the summer, thanks to the staff who worked tirelessly with recruitment efforts to cut that drop. In an effort to shrink the gap, the college also designed an 11-week condensed fall term to provide students, who for a variety of reasons, did not register on time, with one more opportunity to attend college. The college also

expects to serve 48 Providence Public School District (PPSD) seniors as part of the Accelerate Program, a fulltime enrollment program between RIDE, PPCSD, RIC, The College Crusade, and CCRI. As far as the COVID cases, early reports indicate that things are going well at CCRI, with just four students and two staff members testing positive for the virus.

4b. RI Reconnect

Dr. Tammy Warner, Assistant Commissioner of Postsecondary Education, gave a presentation on RI Reconnect, a program in the Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, with two overarching goals: Help adults get on a path to complete a degree or certificate program, and help students address the barriers that they might have to education completion. The program is funded by the Lumina Foundation extended through February 2021, with additional funding supports work through December 2021, and was designed to support the State's 70% attainment goal and decrease equity gaps in post-secondary educational attainment. Students in the program will be assigned Educational Navigators, who will provide personal coaching on assessing their needs, interests and goals, monitoring their progress, as well as connecting them with educational, training, and credential opportunities. RI Reconnect has formed a partnership with the Back to Work RI initiative, to assist individuals who are unemployed, Covid affected, who are engaging in approved credential or training programs, as well as provide them access to transportation and childcare.

Next, Omar Reyes, Director of Adult Programs and Policies, Office of the Postsecondary Commissioner, gave an overview on how interested students can access the program. He shared that students fill out a short online assessment and get connected with an Educational Navigator within 24 to 38 business hours. Since the August 17 launch, the program has received 208 inquiries, mostly from women in the 30-49 year-old range with various degrees of educational background, with 80% being unemployed as a result of COVID-19.

4c. Readiness Project Course Supported through SAIL (Summer Academy for Interactive Learning) – Status Update

Stephen Osborn, RIDE's Chief of Innovation, shared that back in May, RIDE partnered with programs throughout the State to create amazing summer learning opportunities for children and families, by setting priorities and aligning programs to those priorities and learning some valuable lessons that will help in future years.

Next, Liz Texeira, RIDE's Education Specialist, explained that PrepareRI College Readiness Project launched a pilot back in January with six schools and 233 students, but was interrupted as a result of Covid-19. However, RIDE was able to significantly expand the Readiness Project over the summer through SAIL, starting with a 12th grade mathematics program with RIC faculty and high school teachers across the State, to ensure that students were prepared to go to credit-bearing coursework in postsecondary education, thus avoiding the trap of remediation. Three additional courses were introduced – 9th grade mathematics class, to ensure students were prepared for algebra; 9th grade English Language Arts; and 12th and 13th year English Language Arts, for students who had recently graduated and were most significantly impacted by the virus. Of the 1,600 students who signed-up

for the courses, 54% were students of color, 30% were from urban core areas, and 6% were multilingual learners. Instruction was delivered by 71 local teachers from diverse backgrounds, who went through a three-week professional development training, provided by West-Ed.

Next, Spencer Sherman, RIDE's Director of Innovation, presented on the early analysis of the student outcomes data. He highlighted that students who took the 9th grade mathematics class, their scores increased by an average of 15 points, and all subgroups of students improved their algebra score. High school students ranked preparing for high school as the number one reason for enrolling, while college students were most motivated by the stipend they received and improving their academic skills. Students who did not complete the course reported scheduling conflicts and issues with technology as the cause. In January 2021, RIDE will be refining the content of all four courses to represent a semester's worth of content, which will be implemented in-school for middle and high school students. This can be part of the normal school day, either as a stand-alone, a semester-long course elective, or as in intervention block for a district. A long-term analysis of the long-term impacts of the students who participated in the program will be conducted by Harvard as part of a data-sharing agreement with RIDE.

4d. Accelerate – A College Experience for PPSD Seniors in partnership with CCRI, RIC, and The College Crusade of Rhode Island

Commissioner Infante-Green framed the discussion by sharing that before starting this work, RIDE sat down with PPSD to see what could be done for the district's current senior class. The hope was to have every single senior take advantage of the opportunity, however, when analyzing the data, it became apparent that the majority of the seniors did not qualify because their math skills are below a 9th grade level. Commissioner Infante-Green expressed that this makes her very angry and it is a reminder of all of the work that still needs to be done in Providence.

Next, Mr. Osborn shared that given the uncertainty related to the 2020-21 school year, leadership from RIDE, PPSD, CCRI, and RIC, came together this summer to discuss how to partner and provide the students of PPSD, a senior year deserving of their youth. These conversations lead to the creation of Accelerate, a program that allows seniors an opportunity to explore a career pathway/program of study and to earn 24 transferrable college credits. In partnership with the colleges, academic measures, as well as attendance and GPA, were identified as a measure, as well as successful completion of the PrepareRI Readiness Project or the PrepareRI summer internship program.

Next, Kevin Garrick, PPSD's Secondary Transformation Officer, shared that he is new to Rhode Island and was hired to do the core work that Commissioner Infante-Green referred to earlier. He expressed that this is a very difficult time for a senior in high school, so the hope is that this initiative is a bright spot for these students. He noted that the College Crusade of Rhode Island, who has been working with PPSD for many years, was really critical to this effort and right away partnered with the schools to ensure that students were given the opportunity to enroll in one of the six different programs offered by CCRI and RIC.

Next, Amy Kacerik, Dean of Enrollment Management at CCRI, shared that she has enjoyed the very

productive partnership between CCRI, RIC, The College Crusade, with facilitation from RIDE, in determining the student eligibility criteria, discussing the program considerations and desired outcomes, for high school seniors. She explained that CCRI is offering a full-time college experience delivered in a modified cohort model for these seniors. This is a free dual-enrollment opportunity, which provides for an enhanced senior year experience for the students to earn up to 24 transferable college credits, while simultaneously fulfilling their high school graduation requirements. All students are assigned a dedicated team of support staff and advisors, in addition to continue working with their College Crusade counselors to maintain continuity and connection to their high schools throughout the program.

Next, Maddie Burke, Interim Director for Special Projects at CCRI, gave an overview on what the students are currently engaging in. She shared that this week students are in orientation boot camp, which includes spending everyday getting ready for their classes, with the focus on setting expectations on what it means to be successful in college. They are also working on activities relating to team building and getting to know the college staff, whom they can turn to for support when needed.

Next, Dr. Helen Tate, RIC's newest Provost and Vice President for Academic Affairs, expressed that as a new arrival to the State and RIC, she is very proud to see the remarkable partnerships and the work happening between the public elementary and secondary education system and the public institutions for postsecondary education. She shared how excited RIC was for these students who have lost a lot, when approached with the possibility to do, what was presented as, an alternative senior year. RIC's plan is to have the experience be meaningful to the students, while also giving them the opportunity to work with faculty in a transition period to prepare them for what college life is like. RIC was asked to develop two pathway models – an Honors model, for those students seeking the four-year and beyond degree, to be able to explore majors, and considering the number of second language learners in the State, an English Language Learner model, to help those students with the challenges that they have with the English language. The college is offering students a one credit seminar for the entire fall semester and building into it a SAT/ACT prep, career exploration, college application, and time-management. In addition, both cohorts will be offered access to a peer-mentor program, advising support, career counseling, major exploration, and the college's tutoring services. In the spring, the students will be folded into regular classes, but the cohorts will be kept together.

Lastly, Andrew Bramson, President and CEO of The College Crusade of Rhode Island, expressed that the Crusade is very excited for this great partnership that leverages years of experience that the Crusade has had with all of the institutions over the years. He shared that the College Crusade has one staff person starting tomorrow as the Accelerate coach, who happens to be a Crusade alumni, graduate of the Providence public schools, and a graduate of CCRI and RIC. She knows firsthand the landscape that these students are going to be facing, so her role will be to connect the students to the incredible resources available at the institutions, as well as to provide the social connectedness that they are going to need and that they feel connected to their high schools. The Crusade is excited to provide a supporting role with financial aid and the college application process.

5. UPCOMING MEETINGS

Chairman Cottam stated the next meeting of the RI Board of Education is scheduled for Tuesday, November 10, 2020, at 5:30 p.m.

6. ADJOURN:

Chair Cottam called for a motion to adjourn tonight's meeting.

On a motion duly made by Rachelle Green and seconded by Colleen Callahan, it was

VOTED: That, the Rhode Island Board of Education adjourns.

Vote: 12 members voted in the affirmative and 0 members
voted in the negative as follows:

YEAS: Amy Beretta, Barbara Cottam, Colleen Callahan,
Timothy DelGiudice, Gara Field, Jo Eva Gaines, Rachelle Green,
Marta Martinez, Mike Mello, Marianne Monte, Lawrence Purtill,
and Jeffery Williams

NAYS: 0

[Members Duffy and Izzo departed the meeting prior to adjournment]

The meeting adjourned at 7:02 p.m.